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ABSTRACT

The Virginia Statewide Program To Endorse Teachers in Severe and Profound Handicaps was a 5-year personnel preparation project which selected and trained teachers currently unendorsed but employed to teach students with severe disabilities in schools across Virginia. Participating universities included the University of Virginia (UVA), George Mason University, and Virginia Commonwealth University, with Virginia Polytechnical Institute offering practica. The endorsement program consisted of 15 hours of graduate credit, taken primarily on a non-degree inservice basis while teachers continued teaching. Participating teachers took the bulk of their coursework near their place of employment, earned practicum credits where they worked, and attended a summer institute held at UVA. Master teachers from three of Virginia's Technical Assistance Centers in Severe Disabilities assisted in the monitoring of trainees in their classrooms as they designed and implemented practicum activities. Approximately 75 teachers participated in at least one course; 61 of the 75 completed most or all of the project requirements, and 50 of them successfully met the endorsement requirements. This report describes project goals and objectives; the project's conceptual framework; training model, activities, and participants; and evaluation findings. Appendices include a timeline of objectives, activities, and accomplishments; a trainee survey; and a faculty and staff survey questionnaire. (JDD)

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ED 379 877

Personnel Preparation of Special Educators

Virginia Statewide Program to Endorse Teachers of Students with Severe and Profound Handicaps

The Endorsement Project

Final Report

Division of Personnel Preparation
Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services
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Abstract

The Endorsement Project, or the Virginia Statewide Program to Endorse Teachers in Severe and Profound Handicaps, was a five year personnel preparation project (1989-1994) involving the faculty, training programs, and technical assistance centers of several universities. The purpose of the project was to select and train teachers (trainees) currently unendorsed but employed to teach students with severe disabilities in schools across the state. The project, supported by funds from the U.S. Department of Education, was housed at the University of Virginia under the direction of Martha E. Snell, who also directed the Southwestern region; subcontracts were made to three universities in Virginia. George Mason University (GMU) and Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) participated in the design and implementation of all objectives in the training program, with Julie Jones of GMU serving as the Director for the Northern region in years 1-4) (Michael Behrmann for Year 5), and Fred Orelove as the director for the Southeastern region. Virginia Polytechnical Institute (VPI) participated primarily in offering practica (with Wemme Walls, Gretchen Troutman, and Bonnie Nelson serving in succession as the university contact).

The project was organized into three training cycles, each lasting one and one-half years. During each cycle a total of approximately 25 trainees participated from the three geographical regions. The endorsement program consisted of 15 hours of graduate credit, taken primarily on a non-degree, inservice basis, while teachers continued teaching students with severe disabilities. For each cycle, teachers were recruited either through school systems with supervisors recommending candidates or through self-nomination. Applications were evaluated by project faculty and those who were judged qualified and who elected to participate were divided into three geographical regions, each associated with the participating universities: UVA or southwestern region, GMU or northern region, and VCU or southeastern region. All trainees spent two weeks during the summer at the University of Virginia where they took four credits of coursework. Additionally, trainees took the remaining endorsement coursework in their region (at the university or in a closer location through continuing education), along with several credits of supervised practicum at the location where they were employed.

Specialists, or master teachers, from three of Virginia's Technical Assistance Centers (TACs) in Severe Disabilities assisted in the monitoring of trainees in their classrooms as they designed and implemented practicum activities. The TAC specialists had close communication with project faculty from UVA, VCU, and GMU. Two of these three TACs were located at GMU and VCU and served trainees in their respective geographical regions (northern and southeastern), while UVA in the southwestern region worked closely with the TAC specialist at VPI (Mickey Vanderwerker). The TAC specialists from GMU included Annette Carr and Bev Mattson; the TAC specialists from VCU included Kathy Wolff and Trice Lewis. In addition to the TAC specialists, the project Graduate Assistants had regular contact

with trainees on their assignments, coursework, and the details concerning the summer institute; four assistants worked with the Endorsement Project over the course of its funding (Tracy DelGrego, Dianne Koontz Lowman, George Drake, and Kerri Martin).

During the last year, a series of evaluative activities were implemented including a questionnaire to trainees and project staff, an in-depth case study of four trainees, and a focus group discussion with leaders in personnel preparation in Virginia. A description of the training model and evaluative results were presented at the TASH conference in Atlanta in December, 1994.

A total of approximately 75 teachers participated in atleast one course, while 61 trainees completed most or all of the project requirements. Of this group of 61 trainees, 50 successfully met the endorsement requirements and one additional trainee has a single course remaining.

Virginia Statewide Program to Endorse Teachers of Students with Severe and Profound Handicaps Project: Final Report
Overview

The Virginia Statewide Program to Endorse Teachers of Students with Severe and Profound Handicaps ended last month after five years of operation. The purpose of the project was to select and train teachers currently working with students having severe disabilities who were chosen for their talents or their potential for being quality teachers and for their likelihood of staying in their vocation. The training program consisted of 15 semester credits of graduate coursework and practicum which met the state's requirements for endorsement in severe disabilities. Trainees, or those teachers who participated in the project, took the bulk of their coursework in locations near their place of employment, while practicum credits were earned where they worked. All trainees took four credits during a Summer Institute held at the University of Virginia. Table 1 summarizes the timeline of training over three repeated cycles, each lasting 18 months. Over the course of five years, approximately 75 teachers participated in atleast one course, while 61 teachers participated in the bulk of the required coursework and 50 completed the endorsement requirements.

Project Goals and Objectives

The Endorsement project had one primary goal: to improve the public school programs for students with severe disabilities in Virginia by training teachers responsible for these public school students. In order to reach the project's goal, we designed activities to address eight objectives:

1. Recruit and select teachers to participate in the training program.
2. Develop and offer quality graduate coursework.
3. Develop, offer, and supervise practica.
4. Establish a network of teachers.
5. Coordinate agencies involved with the project.
6. Provide an effective system of management for the project.
7. Evaluate the project.
8. Disseminate project findings.

Funding began in October 1989 and was completed December 31, 1994 (following a 3 month no cost extension beyond the termination date of September 30, 1994). The project was housed at the University of Virginia with subcontracts to three universities in Virginia. George Mason University (GMU) and Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) participated in the design and implementation of all objectives in the training program, while Virginia Polytechnical Institute (VPI) participated primarily in the monitoring of practica in the southwestern region (Figure 1).

Table 1
Endorsement Sequence

	Semester	Generic Course Title/Activity	University
Year 1	Cycle I		
	Spring '90	Course I-1: Functional Curriculum	All
	Summer '90	Course I-2: Characteristics/Best Practices Practicum I-1 EVALUATE SUMMER INSTITUTE	UVa Summer Institute
	Fall '90	Course I-3: Physical Management & Self-Care* Practicum I-2	All
Year 2	Spring '91	Course I-4: Communication & Behavior Management* Practicum I-3 EVALUATE CYCLE I	All
	Cycle II		
	Summer '91	Course II-1: Characteristics/Best Practices Independent Study II-1 EVALUATE SUMMER INSTITUTE	UVa Summer Institute
	Fall '91	Course II-2: Functional Curriculum Practicum II-1	All
Year 3	Spring '92	Course II-3: Physical Management & Self-Care* Practicum II-2	All
	Summer '92	Course II-4: Communication & Behavior Management* EVALUATE CYCLE II	All
	Cycle III		
	Fall '92	Course III-1: Characteristics/Best Practices	All
Year 4	Spring '93	Course III-2: Physical Management & Self-Care Practicum III-1	All
	Summer '93	Course III-3: Functional Curriculum Independent Study III-1 * EVALUATE SUMMER INSTITUTE	UVa Summer Institute
	Fall '93	Course III-4: Communication & Behavior Management Practicum III-2 EVALUATE CYCLE III	All
Year 5	Evaluation/Dissemination		
	Spring '94	Follow-up All Trainees Analyze Results	All
	Summer '94	Disseminate Findings	All

* Order of classes may vary across regions.

Figure 2. Location of the 61 trainees who participated extensively in the required endorsement course work.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this personnel preparation project rested on a series of best practices or widely accepted tenets regarding: (a) the instruction of students with severe disabilities, (b) teachers of students with severe disabilities, and (c) the preparation of these teachers.

Program Quality Indicators. Part of this conceptual framework is described in an article by Meyer, Eichinger, and Park-Lee (1987) which set forth a validated listing of Program Quality Indicators (PQI) of educational services for students with severe disabilities. Agreement on the 123 indicators had been determined by the authors for several groups of respondents, including teacher trainers, researchers, program administrators, and parents of individuals with severe disabilities. The indicators represented not only research-based instructional strategies and program characteristics, but also social values. The authors suggested that the program quality indicators, or PQIs, be used to design and evaluate educational programs serving students with severe disabilities.

It was our intent to let the program quality indicators serve as a cross-reference for the content of courses and practicum addressed by the program. Initially, we used this listing as a guide for planning both required coursework and for structuring practicum experiences and evaluation. Additionally, during the first cycle, trainees self-rated their own skills and the characteristics of their programs against the PQI; however, in later cycles, we decided that without having independent ratings of the same programs by project staff, that early trainee self-ratings were not accurate enough to determine trainee and trainees' program needs; instead, we used the on-site observations of the regional TAC specialists in combination with trainee's self-evaluation. On an informal level, the PQI served as a set of guidelines for the content we taught in the endorsement program.

Course matrix. The Endorsement project involved the training programs in severe disabilities from three universities. Each graduate program had received prior state approval of their program in severe disabilities. Since the three universities cooperated in the offering of coursework and practica, it was necessary to develop a common set of courses which fulfilled the state's requirements for endorsement in severe disabilities. To accomplish this end, we made a matrix of Virginia's endorsement competencies and each university's required courses for meeting these competencies (Table 2).

From this matrix, we developed a listing of courses and practica with generic titles which addressed their core content (Table 3). In a few cases where several courses addressed a single competency (refer to Table 2), the single course spanning the broadest coverage was selected as the endorsement course; any missing content was added to that course. For example, at both GMU and UVA the core course on

Table 2
Matrix of Project Universities' Courses with Virginia Endorsement Competencies

Endorsement in SD	University Courses
1. Characteristics and medical aspects	UVA: EDIS 513 GMU: EDSE 647 VCU: EDU 558
2. Behavior management, communication devices, social development, self-care	UVA: EDIS 711, 712, 715 GMU: EDSE 552, 662, 620, 621 VCU: MRT 600, EDU 558
3. Occupational and physical therapy	UVA: EDIS 712 GMU: EDSE 668 VCU: EDU 558
4. Social, leisure, and vocational skills	UVA: EDIS 713 GMU: EDSE 669 VCU: MRT 610
5. Practicum	UVA: EDIS 789 GMU: EDSE 790 VCU: EDU 700

Table 3

Generic Course Title

1. Characteristics of Persons with Severe Disabilities / Best Practices

2. Communication / Positive Behavior Management

3. Positioning, Handling, and Self-Care Skills

4. Functional Curriculum and Vocational Skills

5. Practicum

communication (competency #2: behavior management, communication devices, social development, and self care) addressed two of the three competency areas. While self care was covered under coursework addressing the third competency (occupation and physical therapy), coverage of positive behavior management was *added* to the communication course for project teachers. These two topics were viewed as highly compatible given the focus of functional assessment of problem behavior and functional communicative alternatives to problem behavior.

This generic course listing in Table 3, which totalled 15 hours of semester credit, enabled us to standardize our training program somewhat across the universities. With the exception of the Summer Institute courses held only at UVA, each university offered these courses to trainees during each cycle in the respective regions under each university's specific title and course numbers.

Application of content. The design of this project rested firmly upon our belief that practice teaching under the supervision of master teachers can have enormous value for teachers-in-training. Furthermore, we felt that practice teaching in one's own employment situation with students having severe disabilities was the ideal arena for learning. Consistent with these beliefs, we designed a series of applied assignments that could be molded to fit the needs of the particular teacher and his or her students, classroom, and school situation. These assignments were fashioned after the Program Quality Indicators (Meyer et al., 1987) in order to address essential program elements that might be missing or weak. Assignments addressed a range of topics, including: (a) the development of teaching programs directed toward specific students' IEP objectives, (b) improvements in scheduling (e.g., integrated therapy, collaboration with general education teachers, community-based instruction), and (c) general improvements directed toward the school or the teacher's whole program (e.g., improving or establishing programs for active communication, integration or inclusion, transition and job training, community-based instruction, etc.).

Assignments were graded on a pass-fail basis, based on the belief that all trainees needed to accomplish the application of core concepts to an acceptable level of competence. Thus, these teachers worked closely with the TAC specialist (who all were master teachers) to design these assignments and develop drafts which were read by project faculty, evaluated informally, and returned to teachers for final improvements.

Similarly, in our classes, we attempted to use relevant student illustrations so that content could be applied. We did this initially by asking teachers to bring videotapes of their students to the initial summer institute. Later, because of the difficulty teachers had with making tapes that illustrated best practices, we filmed a series of case studies of four students with severe disabilties of differing ages and support intensities. We used these cases throughout the last cycle of training. Furthermore, many of our tests involved the resolution of problems for specific

students described in detail; teachers typically were allowed to use their readings and notes to answer these questions and were given feedback on their answers in the form of model answers.

Description of Training Model, Activities, and Participants

The training model used in this project was based on the premise of making quality graduate training easily available to unendorsed teachers of students with severe disabilities across the state of Virginia. The model was characterized by: (a) its involvement of state approved training programs from three state universities to enable training in multiple locations; (b) its use of state-funded technical assistance centers in severe disabilities to provide on-site consultation to trainees during their practicum experiences; and (c) three repetitions of a fairly short training program of 15 graduate credits with coursework offered close to trainees' locations. Table 1 summarizes the timeline of training over three repeated cycles, each lasting 18 months.

Training activities. The training activities paralleled the eight objectives and are set forth in Appendix A with a final reporting on their accomplishment and/or modification. A perusal of Appendix A indicates that most of the planned activities were accomplished with little or no modification and by the date predicted. Major deviations from this planned agenda are discussed in the next section of this report.

Trainees. The training participants, or trainees, who completed a majority of the required courses totalled 61 individuals. Of these 61, 50 completed all the required courses in the endorsement program. Table 4 shows the numbers of trainees by region who applied, were accepted, and who started and completed each cycle. Figure 2 shows the location of these 61 trainees within Virginia.

During a recent survey of 48 of these participants (83% return rate) in the spring of 1984, we learned that most teachers (85%) were currently teaching with a majority (56%) having atleast some students on their caseload who had severe disabilities. Over 68% indicated that they worked in public school settings while the remainder worked in residential schools or in more than one setting (15%). Of the 85% who taught students, 8% served *only* students with severe disabilties, 48% served students with severe disabilties along with others (e.g., those with moderate mental retardation, blindness, multiple disabilities, etc.), and 35% served students with milder disabilities, nondisabled students, or both. Most trainees surveyed taught elementary-aged students (21%), but 17% taught middle school students, 12% taught high school students, 6% taught adults, and 27% taught multiple age groups.

Of the 48 surveyed, approximately 40% were trained during the first cycle, with 23% in the second cycle, and 37% in the last cycle. By geographical region, 52% of the trainees came from the southwestern region, 23% from the southeastern region,

Table 4

Trainee Data by Cycle

Cycle 1

	Applied	Accepted	Started	Completed
UVA	18	11	11	10
VCU	14	10	9	7
GMU	11	4	4	3
Total	43	25	24	19

Cycle 2

	Applied	Accepted	Started	Completed
UVA	12	9	9	8
VCU	9	5	3	2
GMU	2	2	2	1
Total	23	16	14	11

Cycle 3

	Applied	Accepted	Started	Completed
UVA	19	13	12	10
VUC	8	5	5	4
GMU	12	10	9	6
Total	39	28	26	20

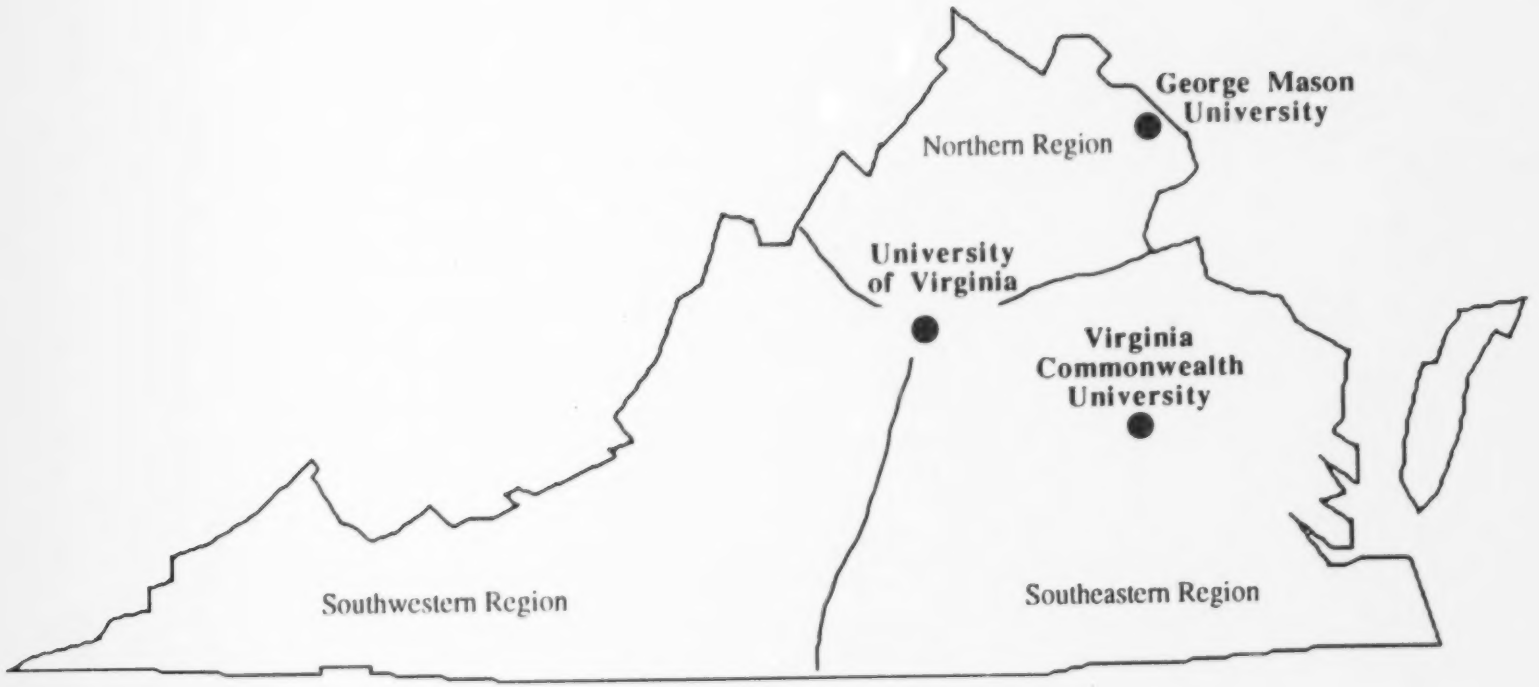

Figure 1. The participating universities and geographical regions in the Endorsement Project.

and 25% from the northern region. Eighty-four percent of the 61 trainees were female, while 7% (or 4) were African-American, and less than 2% (or 1) was Hispanic.

Departures from the Project Objectives and Planned Activities

Appendix A sets forth not only the accomplishments but also the modifications from planned activities over the entire project period. For the most part, our major objectives and activities were accomplished with little or no modifications. However, as we shall explain next, there were some modifications made necessary by primarily fiscal factors.

One of the greatest departures from our original goals and objectives was in the projected number of trainees or teachers we would endorse over the course of the project. Our initial application indicated an ambitious goal of endorsing 106 teachers in five years. During the first continuation application however, we revised that number to 87, due primarily to significant modifications in financial support from the State Department of Education. In the end, there were approximately 75 trainees who participated in atleast one course, while 61 trainees completed most or all of the project requirements. Of this group of 61 trainees, 50 successfully met the endorsement requirements and one additional trainee has a single course remaining. In later sections, we will discuss the possible causes for this lower number of teachers completing the endorsement requirements.

A second modification from planned activities included the inability to offer courses via satellite transmission due to low demand for the coursework and the cost of such technology. Third, our initial proposal included financial contributions to trainees' tuition for endorsement coursework from the Virginia State Department of Education. These funds, referred to as "state retraining money," were made available to universities for reimbursing the tuition costs for courses taken toward endorsements in special education. After the first cycle, these funds were no longer available to all universities and we had to rely primarily upon grant funds for coverage of tuition costs. Finally, we were less successful than expected in our recruitment efforts, despite the use of multiple means to advertise the Endorsement Project. The smaller number of applicants was less of a problem given the shortage of state retraining support to supplement grant stipends. Having a smaller pool of applicants meant that we may have accepted teachers who were somewhat less skilled, though all participants still needed to complete their endorsement in severe disabilities.

Evaluation Findings

Several procedures were employed to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the Endorsement Project and to collect recommendations for the development of future teacher-training programs. First, to solicit information directly from project trainees, a survey instrument was developed (see Appendix B). Second, a questionnaire

composed of open-ended questions about roles, strengths and weaknesses of the program, and suggestions for program design was developed for faculty and staff personnel to complete (see Appendix C). Third, in-depth case studies of four of the project trainees, which generated a description of their job-tasks and teaching practices were also conducted. The four case study trainees and their supervisors were interviewed to discern how they thought the Endorsement Project effected their practices. The purpose of the case studies was not to evaluate the trainees, but rather to provide illustrations for the "best practices" included in the program's curriculum and to give program developers an impression of the kinds of settings teacher-trainees worked in and the kinds of duties they were expected to fulfill. Finally, a focus-group discussion was facilitated with key personnel from the State Department of Education to determine how the Endorsement Project was perceived in those settings, to discuss problems with planning statewide endorsement programs, and to solicit recommendations for future program development.

Methods of Data Collection

Trainee Survey

The survey sent to project trainees was developed at a meeting with several project staff members (Appendix B). In the first section of the survey, trainees were asked to provide demographic data about their teaching experiences. In the second section, trainees were asked to rate the degree to which the Endorsement project had changed their thinking about and their practice of ten "best practices" that were emphasized in Endorsement project courses. A Likert-type scale was used, with choices ranging from "Very much" to "None." Trainees also could choose "Already thought/practiced that way" to indicate that the program may have had little influence as they had previously recognized the value of a given practice. In the final section of the survey, trainees were asked to respond to three open-ended questions to describe in more detail how the project had influenced their thinking or practices, and to provide general comments and suggestions about the program.

At the time the trainee survey was developed, there were 60 project trainees who had completed most of the project requirements. Several of the trainees had dropped out of the project and were not sent surveys. Of the 60 who were eligible to receive surveys, two could not be located because they had moved. Therefore, 58 surveys were mailed. Two separate mailings were used to request surveys over the course of several months, and survey recipients were told they would be paid $30 each upon returning the surveys; eventually, 48 of the surveys (83%) were returned.

Faculty and Staff Questionnaire

The faculty and staff questionnaire was developed primarily by the project's Principle Investigator and a graduate assistant Appendix C). Project faculty and staff members were asked to describe their involvement in the project, to comment on

specific strengths and weaknesses of the project, to respond to remarks made by project trainees (from the open-ended question on the trainee survey requesting general comments and suggestions), and to suggest how they would structure future Endorsement Projects.

A list of project staff was generated by the Principle Investigator and included project instructors, practicum supervisors, and graduate assistants. Of the nine questionnaires mailed, six were completed and returned.

Observations and Interviews

Several criteria were used to guide the selection of project trainees for inclusion in the case studies: (a) They had to be currently teaching or working with people with severe disabilities; (b) they had to be willing to participate and articulate comments about their participation; and (c) they had to have completed all components of the program. A primary list and a backup list of potential trainees was generated at a meeting with several project staff members. Letters were sent to those individuals, and they were asked to return a post card indicating whether they would be interested in being observed and interviewed (they were told that they would be paid $100 each for participating). Two individuals were eventually selected from the primary list, and two from the backup list. Letters were then sent to those individuals and their supervisors to arrange times for classroom observations and interviews with the teachers and their supervisors. The teachers were located in different towns in Virginia (one in the north, one in the east, one in central Virginia, and one in the southern part of the state). One of the teachers was at an elementary school, one at a middle school, and two were teaching at high schools. All four of the teachers were women.

In order to assess the reliability of field notes taken during classroom observations (which lasted an average of five hours), the Principle Investigator and a graduate assistant both observed the first teacher in her classroom and recorded extensive field notes. Afterwards, the notes were expanded and then compared to check for consistency and similarity of observations. The notes were determined to be quite similar, and no interactions or comments that seemed particularly important were included in one set of notes that were not also included in the other set. Therefore, it was determined that the graduate assistant could observe the other three teachers in their classrooms on her own. After field notes had been written for all four of the observations, the notes were coded to identify common themes and to describe the data sets. Before proceeding with qualitative analysis of all of the field notes for a future paper, the Principle Investigator will independently code one set of the field notes, and her codes will be compared to those of the graduate assistant.

A system developed by a former graduate assistant to the Endorsement Project, George Drake, was used to transfer the field notes coded in Microsoft Word to the data management program FileMaker Pro (Drake, 1993). This program allows for

manipulation of segments of field notes so that they can be combined and cross-referenced in a variety of ways (i.e., based on code and teacher observed) and greatly facilitates the arrangement of field notes into meaningful parts (e.g., all of the notes that referred to descriptions of interactions between students and teachers could be combined). These parts were then analyzed for themes common to all four sets of notes. For the purposes of this evaluation, the field notes were used to provide illustrations of the concepts that were considered to be "best practices" by the program instructors. Further analysis of the field notes will be available in a future article.

In addition to observing the four teachers in their classrooms, interviews were conducted with the teachers and their supervisors. The teachers were asked to describe their roles, how they think the Endorsement Project has influenced their teaching practices, and what barriers they think may be keeping them from implementing their own classroom programs as they would like to. Supervisors were asked to describe their relationship to the teachers, what they know about the Endorsement Project, how they think it has influenced the teachers, and what they think an ideal program for students with severe disabilities would look like. They were also asked to discuss any barriers that they perceive may be keeping them from implementing their "ideal" program. The initial letters requesting interviews with the teachers' supervisors were sent to the principals at their schools; however, the principals were encouraged to forward the letter to another person if they thought someone else would be more able to comment on the teachers' programs and responsibilities. One of the supervisors interviewed was a principal, one was an assistant principal, one was a coordinator for special education services, and one was a team leader in her school's special education department.

The interviews were tape recorded, after obtaining permission from the parties involved, and later transcribed by the project secretary at the University of Virginia. The transcriptions were checked for accuracy by the project's graduate assistant, and copies were mailed to the four teachers and their supervisors who were asked to check the transcripts for accuracy and to clarify anything that they thought was unclear.

Focus Group Interview

Letters were mailed to eight people at the Virginia Department of Education, three people from the Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure, and one person at the Virginia Institute on Developmental Disabilities requesting trainees for a focus group interview. The letter described the general purpose of the focus group (i.e., to discuss endorsement of teachers of students with severe disabilities), informed people that the meeting would be audiotaped, and stated that the meeting would take place at the University of Virginia Continuing Education Richmond Center (in Richmond) and that it would take about two hours. Eight of the people who were

invited to participate in the focus group indicated that they were interested in attending. One of those people was ultimately unable to attend, resulting in seven participants, six from the Virginia Department of Education and one from the Virginia Institute on Developmental Disabilities.

Several open-ended questions were developed by the Principle Investigator with feedback from a graduate assistant. The questions were designed to solicit participants' views about personnel preparation, relevant criteria for low-incidence disability teacher-training programs, barriers to effective programming, and creative solutions to problems that exist with preparing teachers of students with severe disabilities in the state of Virginia.

After all of the participants were assembled for the group interview, the Principle Investigator explained a consent form and asked everyone to consider signing it. The form simply stated that the meeting would be audiotaped, that people's names would not be divulged, and that they could withdraw at any time. All participants signed the form. During the discussion, a tape recorder with two special multidirectional microphones was used. The microphones were strategically placed on the long rectangular table so that each participant was an equal distance from one of the microphones. A small back-up recorder was placed in the center of the table. A graduate assistant monitored the recorders and changed tapes when needed (the large and small recorders were started at different times so that none of the conversation was lost during tape changing). The graduate assistant also wrote down the first few words and major ideas expressed by each participant so that individuals could be matched to statements after the tapes were transcribed. The Principle Investigator (Snell) and the Director of the southeastern region (Orelove) served as facilitators, occasionally asking questions and redirecting comments.

After the tapes from the interview were transcribed, the graduate assistant matched each comment with the person who had made it. Because of the notes taken during the focus group interview, virtually every statement was matched with the appropriate person. Only a few remarks (i.e., such as "uh, huh," "Right," and several of no greater relevance) were unidentified. The graduate assistant then read the transcripts, looking for themes; as expected, the themes were related to the questions that were asked. The statements made by the focus group trainees were coded and later summarized.

Results

Trainee Survey

Quantitative data. Table 5 shows the disbursement of survey respondents across the three training cycles and regions. Response rates to the survey ranged from 50% to 100%. Respondents from Cycle 2 had the highest average response rate by cycle, with 83%. Respondents from the Southwest region had the highest

Table 5
Numbers and Percentages of Surveys Sent and Returned

Cycle	Southwest Region			Southeast Region			Northern Region			Total
	Sent	Returned		Sent	Returned		Sent	Returned		
1	11	10	91%	7	6	86%	6	3	50%	76%
2	7	7	100%	3	3	100%	2	1	50%	83%
3	10	8	80%	5	2	40%	8	8	100%	73%
Total			90%			75%			67%	

average response rate by region, with 90% of the trainees who were mailed surveys responding.

The information from the first and second sections of the trainee survey was coded; these two sections asked that trainees provide demographic data and respond to questions about their thinking about and practice of "best practices". Next, these data were analyzed using the SPSS statistical package. Descriptive data, or frequencies, were recorded for each of the questions. About 85 percent of the respondents indicated that they were teaching at the time of the survey, and 56 percent of those indicated that they were working with at least some students who have severe disabilities. About 21 percent of the teachers worked with elementary school children, but over 27 percent of the teachers indicated that they worked with multiple age groups. Over 68 percent worked in a public school setting.

In order to perform inferential statistics, or t-tests, some of the frequency data was collapsed so that there would be enough subjects in the groups of interest and so that effects would be clear. Respondents were divided into two groups: Those who teach students with severe disabilities (including those who teach students with other disabilities as well), and those who do not teach students with severe disabilities (e.g., those who teach only student with other disabilities). Individuals who were not currently teaching were not included in this analysis (they were instructed to respond only to the open-ended questions at the end of the survey). The first group was composed of 25 individuals, and the second group was composed of 16 individuals. The responses to the questions about best practices were also collapsed: The choices "Very Much" and "Quite a lot" were combined, as were the choices "A little bit" and "None." "Already Thought or Practiced" was kept as a third choice.

When the responses to the questions about best practices were collapsed (see Table 6), the frequency data indicated some strong reported effects. For example, trainees' thinking about Inclusion, Transition, Communication, Transdisciplinary Teaming, and Functional and Age-Appropriate Skills was reported to have changed or been influenced by the Endorsement Project "quite a lot" to "very much" by 62 to 75 percent of the respondents. Practices, however, appeared to have been somewhat less influenced by the program, with Inclusion, Transition, and Functional or Age-Appropriate Skills practices reported to have been influenced or changed by the Endorsement Project "quite a lot" to "very much" by 52 to 65 percent of the trainees.

Separate t-tests were conducted on each of the questions about best practices regarding how the program changed or influenced trainees' thinking, and how it changed or influenced their practices. The question was asked: Is there a difference in responses to the questions about best practices between the group of teachers who are currently working with students with severe disabilities and those who are not? The results of these t-tests are summarized in Table 7. The mean values in Table 7 are based on the three collapsed choices for each question: 1) quite a lot to very

Table 6

Trainee Responses (in Percent) to Questions about Best Practices (N=41)

Best Practices	Program Influenced *Thinking*			Program Influenced *Practice*		
	Very much-quite a lot	A little-none	A/T	Very much-quite a lot	A little-none	A/P
Inclusion	62	23	15	52	33	15
Work with Families	42	31	27	44	39	17
Transition	75	17	8	55	37	8
Communication	71	19	10	65	29	6
Transdisciplinary Teaming	65	27	8	42	52	6
Functional and Age-Appropriate Skills	64	13	23	56	23	21
Positioning and Handling	48	42	10	44	43	13
Nonaversive Techniques	53	35	12	43	43	14
Peer Support Networks	48	45	7	38	54	8

Performance Data to Improve Programs	50	38	12	49	39	12

Note: Only respondents who indicated that they were teaching at the time of the survey answered this section.

Table 7

Differences between Teachers of Students with Severe Disabilities and Those Without Severe Disabilities

Question	Group	Mean	Probability
Think Inclusion	Teachers of Severe	1.41	.363
	Teachers of Others	1.61	
Think Family	Teachers of Severe	1.74	.307
	Teachers of Other	2.00	
Think Transition	Teachers of Severe	1.29	.919
	Teachers of Other	1.28	
Think Communication	Teachers of Severe	1.22	.090
	Teachers of Other	1.56	
Think Transdisciplinary	Teachers of Severe	1.56	.037*
	Teachers of Other	1.17	
Think Functional	Teachers of Severe	1.23	.001*
	Teachers of Other	2.06	
Think Positioning	Teachers of Severe	1.67	.408
	Teachers of Other	1.50	
Think Nonaversive	Teachers of Severe	1.44	.114
	Teachers of Other	1.78	
Think Peer Support	Teachers of Severe	1.37	.005*
	Teachers of Other	1.89	
Think Data Collection	Teachers of Severe	1.41	.008*
	Teachers of Other	1.94	
Practice Inclusion	Teachers of Severe	1.41	.026*
	Teachers of Other	1.89	

Practice Family	Teachers of Severe	1.67	.621
	Teachers of Other	1.78	
Practice Transition	Teachers of Severe	1.38	.080
	Teachers of Other	1.72	
Practice Communication	Teachers of Severe	1.26	.091
	Teachers of Other	1.56	
Practice Transdisciplinary	Teachers of Severe	1.59	.677
	Teachers of Other	1.67	
Practice Functional	Teachers of Severe	1.33	.002*
	Teachers of Other	2.06	
Practice Positioning	Teachers of Severe	1.50	.514
	Teachers of Other	1.63	
Practice Nonaversive	Teachers of Severe	1.56	.075
	Teachers of Other	1.94	
Practice Peer Support	Teachers of Severe	1.59	.188
	Teachers of Other	1.83	
Practice Data Collection	Teachers of Severe	1.44	.062
	Teachers of Other	1.83	

*Significant at the .05 level or better

much, 2) little to none, and 3) already thought or practiced. Therefore, a mean value closer to 1 indicates that more people were strongly influenced by the program than were not so influenced. Significant differences were found between teachers who work with students with severe disabilities and teachers who do not for (a) thinking about transdisciplinary teaming/collaboration, (b) thinking about functional and age-appropriate skills, (c) thinking about peer support networks, (d) thinking about collecting student performance data to improve programs, (e) practicing inclusion, and (f) practicing functional and age-appropriate skills. In all cases except (a), thinking about transdisciplinary teaming/collaboration, the teachers working with students with severe disabilities indicated that they were significantly more influenced by the Endorsement Project than were the teachers who were not working with students with severe disabilities.

Trends across the three cycles and training regions. Tables 8a and 8b indicate the numbers of positive remarks, criticisms, and suggestions made by trainees in all regions and cycles in response to the open-ended question asking for general comments and feedback. All of the sentences written by respondents were coded as either a criticism, positive remark, or suggestion. Ninety-nine sentences were coded in this manner, resulting in 34 critical comments (8 made by one person in the Southwest region of cycle 1), 40 positive comments, and 25 suggestions. Sixty-three percent of the respondents from cycle 1 wrote critical statements and only 47% wrote positive statements; however, in cycle 3, 61% wrote positive statements and 28% wrote critical statements (percentages do not add up to 100 because people could make more than one type of statement). Forty-eight percent of the respondents from the Southwest region wrote critical comments (primarily pertaining to the number of assignments and the length of time allowed for assignments), but the majority of them wrote suggestions instead of, or in addition to, other comments (56%). In contrast, the majority of people in both the Southeast region (73%) and the Northern region (67%) wrote positive comments.

Qualitative data. In addition to questions soliciting demographic data and responses to thinking and practice regarding a list of best practices, project trainees were asked three open-ended questions. In the first question, trainees were asked to elaborate on how the Endorsement Project influenced their *thinking* about individuals with disabilities and their families. Their comments included:

> It provided me with more insight into the basic needs of the special population I work with. I feel I have a better understanding of what their parents have to deal with, including their problems. I feel I can better cope with these families.
>
> It changed my thinking to the point that I now realize that each individual can participate in any activity to some extent (partial participation) no matter the degree of the disability.

Table 8a
Types of Statements Written by Trainees in Cycles 1 Through 3

Cycle	Criticism	Suggestion	Positive
1	63%	63%	47%
2	18%	55%	55%
3	28%	17%	61%

Note: Percentages do not total 100 because respondents could write more than one comment.

Table 8b

Types of Statements Written by Trainees in Different Regions

Region	Criticism	Suggestion	Positive
Southwestern	48%	56%	40%
Southeastern	27%	36%	73%
Northern	33%	25%	67%

Note: Percentages do not total 100 because respondents could write more than one comment.

Better understanding of current best practices and why I would choose to follow this route in service delivery to individuals with severe disabilities and their families.

It helped me see that the traditional teaching activities within the classroom that emphasized nonfunctional skills for individuals with severe/profound disabilities were not beneficial. In fact, such teaching activities (i.e., assembling pegs in a board) were very damaging since many individuals have difficulty generalizing these skills.

It helped me to see and understand how much these individuals are capable of doing. It also made me realize how much other professionals and paraprofessionals need training and/or in-services in best practices.

The project changed my thinking immensely about all aspects of programming for these kids--and how we serve their families. I think probably the biggest change for me was my attitudes and belief on inclusion.

Individuals with disabilities are integral parts of society and must be treated as such. They have a right to live as independently as possible, and require appropriate training in order for this to occur. They deserve opportunities to exercise control over their own lives, and require opportunities for this to occur. They require help in learning how to care for themselves in a dignified manner and to become as self-sufficient as possible. Training should be undertaken with these thoughts in mind.

In the second question, trainees were asked to elaborate on how their practices with people with severe disabilities were changed by their participation in the Endorsement Project. Some of their comments included:

It changed my practices in preparing lesson plans...I now include error correction procedures and exact cues with more specific details which has improved my training programs tremendously.

I no longer have students performing tasks that are senseless. We now work toward as much as possible on a community based program.

[I use] less aversive behavior criteria, [my] practices are more intent on understanding what underlies behavior and all factors

affecting antecedents. Grew more into a teacher-advocate. Helped parents assume greater roles as advocates for their children. Learned to work with general education better as a result of integration.

The endorsement project changed many practices in my teaching. I started making sure that each of my students learned how to play with age-appropriate toys and encouraged this in the home environments. After learning about partial participation, my students participated in some way in each activity we did. Before the endorsement project, I integrated my students for 1 or 2 resources. After being in the endorsement project, my students were integrated for many activities, all resources, homeroom, circle, language arts, math, recess, and lunch.

Provided me with great ideas to change the things I could within my environment, even if the system would not change with me. I learned better ways to foster self-esteem and confidence for my students. I communicated much easier and more openly with the parents, and we got a lot more accomplished in the school year.

It changed my outlook about inclusion. Although my hands are tied, I'm trying to come up with ways to put my students in regular education classes as much as possible. Also, I have come up with ways for my students' parents to get involved.

Our program offered nothing for my students after their school years were over! They were just lost in society. Through the endorsement project, my school now has transition teams, transdisciplinary planning, team teaching, peer support groups, and most of all an alternative to the sheltered workshop---SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT!

The information on vocational programming was most helpful. I learned about the laws related to vocational training and possible places for employment which directly impacted the students that I taught last year. I tried to provide a smooth transition from our program to graduating for our students. MR Services became more involved in our students lives because of the endorsement project.

I plan training so that the learned skill sequences will be those necessary to function more independently both while at the institution and in future (hopefully) less restrictive placements. I

plan opportunities for my students to exercise self-control, and plan situations where naturally occurring consequences for their decisions can occur (within reasonable limits). I plan training so that students will be engaged in age-appropriate activities, and I converse with them as I would any other individual in the community.

The third open-ended question asked trainees to make comments about the program regarding which aspects of the Endorsement Project they think should be kept and which aspects should be changed. The most frequently cited criticisms about the program were:

- There were too many assignments in too short a time. (9 trainees)
- There was too much "theory" and not enough practical, "hands-on," information (e.g., specific strategies for different situations). (5 trainees)
- There was not always sufficient coordination among project staff (e.g., staff sometimes contradicted each other regarding assignment expectations and evaluation). (4 trainees)
- There have been reported problems getting credit for Endorsement Project courses from the VA State Department of Education. (3 trainees)

The most frequently cited positive comments about the program were:

- People learned a great deal from the classes. (13 trainees)
- The practicum experiences were very beneficial, and supervisors gave good suggestions. (5 trainees)

Finally, some suggestions from project trainees were:

- Need to address issues for people in residential settings in addition to those in school settings. (2 trainees)
- Offer the program to people other than special educators (e.g., general educators, therapists, other service providers). (3 trainees).

Faculty and Staff Questionnaires

Respondents. The six respondents included: (a) the consultant for the Southwest region who was involved in all three cycles; (b) a teacher for a course during cycles 1 an 2 and the graduate assistant/project coordinator during cycle 1; (c) the Principle Investigator who wrote the initial grant, taught during all three cycles and served as the Director of the Southwest Region; (d) the Director of the Southeast Region who helped write the grant proposal and taught during all three cycles; (e) the Graduate Assistant for cycles 2 and 3; and (f) the Practicum Supervisor for the Southeast region during cycles 1 and

2. None of the staff members from the Northern Region responded to the questionnaire.

Comments. The comments made by Endorsement Project staff were categorized as either specific to the Endorsement Project or related in general to programs for personnel preparation of teachers working with students having severe disabilities. The comments regarding the Endorsement Project specifically were further categorized as either reflecting on the strengths of the Project, its weaknesses, or recommendations for how it could have been improved. Similarly, comments about personnel preparation programs in general were categorized as either reflecting on the problems of such programs or suggesting recommendations for them.

Strengths of the Endorsement Project. The majority (four out of six) of the respondents to the questionnaire commented that the supervision and training of the trainees in their own localities was a strength of the program. For example, one respondent stated:

> Three regions provided idiographic coursework, practica experiences, and supervision...to a small group of trainees in their own localities who then came together for an intense period of study in a central location. The former characteristic helped the trainees in their own little sections of the state, while the latter allowed a sense of camaraderie to develop among them as they learned that they were not in it by themselves.

Two other respondents commented on trainee camaraderie as well. Three respondents stated that a strength of the Project was that it provided trainees with an opportunity to apply theory and make changes in their own classrooms. According to one respondent, "Each assignment was to be somewhat applied in nature. I believe that these assignments provided an opportunity for the students to internalize, to some degree, the theory that they were learning in the classroom portion of the Summer Institute." Other Project strengths were mentioned by one or two of the respondents, including that the Project (a) "articulated specific values about teaching and translated those values into best practices", (b) cost trainees practically nothing, (c) had high quality instruction and consultation, and (d) improved over the course of the three cycles in response to trainee feedback.

Weaknesses of the Endorsement Project. The most frequently mentioned weakness of the Endorsement Project pertained to problems with the recruitment procedures (three of six respondents). According to one staff member, they

> ...should have mailed recruitment materials directly to teachers using TAC mailing lists, not through special education directors. [We should have] involved a team from a school so as to avoid the isolation that comes from sending trained single teachers back to schools who do not have anyone familiar with the same content, including any teacher supervisor.

Another respondent commented that "What was needed was for the State Dept. of Ed. and school division administrators to do a better job impressing on their teachers the need to participate and what a wonderful opportunity it was."

Other weaknesses were mentioned by just one or two of the respondents, and included: (a) the seemingly unmotivated attitude of some of the trainees, (b) an occasional lack of coordination among project staff, (c) the overuse and abuse of incomplete grades, and (d) challenges with the trainees' writing skills, ability to use the library, to apply new concepts, and other academic weaknesses.

Suggestions to improve the Endorsement Project. Although Project faculty and staff did make several recommendations regarding ways in which the Project could have been improved, none of the suggestions were made by more than one or two individuals. However, several suggestions were made that relate to some of the statements regarding weaknesses of the Project:

> I would use a policy of having the final grade lowered with each successive month of delay on completing an incomplete grade in a course or practicum....At the same time, I would improve the practicum requirements and grading procedures and would stretch out the cycle so that practicum and coursework are not taken at the same time.

> The relationship with the State Department of Education should be much stronger. There have been three different State Superintendents during the 5 years of the Project, each with different organizations imposed and changes made in the department's mission. Probably having added several state department staff formally to the project would make such communication required and thus guaranteed.

> We originally investigated the use of satellite, but with low numbers this was economically unfeasible. If the scope were broadened to teacher teams and a topic of broader training relevance such as integration/inclusion of students with special education needs, for example, then the population would be large

and other universities would not need to be involved, or could be, but satellite transmission could be used.

I think that teacher training programs of the 1990s need to shift away from the narrower focus of single endorsement areas and address more integrated areas of school improvement so that a broader range of teachers are involved and teacher/administrator teams could be used to facilitate the implementation and relevance of college coursework. In any case, the involvement of state departments of education would be even more critical since licensing issues may not be of immediate concern but pending in the future.

Many teachers had a hard time implementing some aspects of best practices in their classrooms because of administrative resistance. While their assignments reflected this, having more support from project staff may have been helpful. It may also have been helpful for them to visit programs that are doing best practices. These visits would be part of their assignments.

Case Studies with Four project Trainees

The case studies (observations in classrooms and interviews with teachers and their supervisors) and interviews were conducted to enable personnel preparation instructors and program developers to obtain a more accurate view of teacher responsibilities and the kinds of barriers to implementing practices learned during in-service and pre-service training. A full analysis of the case studies will be presented in a future paper.

In general, all of the case study participants said that they felt the Endorsement Project had changed their teaching to various degrees. One teacher had had extensive training in the area of severe and profound disabilities elsewhere, before the Endorsement Project, but felt that the Project confirmed her practices and allowed her to brush up on skills. Ironically, she was working mostly with students with disabilities requiring less extensive levels of support than the other three teachers. Probably because of the way questions were asked, very little information was revealed about how specific aspects of the Endorsement Project changed the teachers' practices. However, some of the teachers' comments about Project components included the following:

The technical assistant provided some good, specific ideas for functional and age appropriate skills which improved the class

overall.

> [Use of nonaversive techniques] is something I am working through. I probably have to have students with challenging behavior besides [student's name], because I feel he is a little different. To actually use the technique. I don't think we were given a lot of concrete techniques as to how to do it, but that's something I've been studying more on my own now because of the Project.
>
> It strengthened my commitment to working towards inclusion and getting other teachers involved.
>
> Some things I learned in the program didn't seem helpful at first, but over the years I've seen how they fit in [especially partial participation]. I came back with some good ideas, especially for community participation, but something always gets in the way of my doing the things I want to try [e.g., can't get anyone to stay with students back at school while others go into the community].
>
> Getting endorsed in SPH helped me a lot because my undergrad was in MR and I didn't know anything about the SPH class....until I got into the Endorsement Project, I really did not know how to go about including kids.

Other ways in which the trainees felt that the Endorsement Project had changed their teaching included: (a) increased use of scheduling, (b) extensive use of partial participation techniques, and (c) somewhat more use of data collection for instructional purposes, although all of the trainees said that the way they were told to collect data in the Project was unrealistic (i.e., to frequent and too detailed).

Only one of the people who were identified as being in a supervisory role over the trainees was actually able to comment on a trainee's performance prior to and following her participation in the Endorsement Project. The other supervisors who were interviewed had only limited knowledge of the teachers' activities in their classrooms and no knowledge of the Endorsement Project itself. A coordinator who was familiar with one of the trainees, before and after her participation in the Endorsement Project, stated:

> I think it has definitely helped. She came to us with a speech and language background. She didn't have anything more than her school, college experience. So there were some definite things missing....She experienced a lot of problems with how to react to

students, and I think it was a very tenuous situation, but I've seen her become more comfortable and she would come back from school [Endorsement Project] and talk about different strategies.

Focus Group Interview

The comments made by the focus group participants were categorized as either pertaining to problems with endorsing teachers of students with severe disabilities in general, or recommendations for training those teachers.

Problems with training teachers. Although many different topics were discussed during the focus group interview, few topics were dwelt on long enough to result in a list of frequently mentioned problems. However, several important problems were discussed by the participants, including: (a) the use of a high proportion of waivers in contrast to other teachers in special education and other areas; (b) limited access to training because programs are offered where faculty are, rather than where teachers in need of training are located; (c) difficulty of getting money to support endorsement programs in low-incidence areas (i.e., severe disabilities); (d) the problem of inflicting stringent rules, or criteria for training, when there are already so few personnel in the field; (e) a trend toward reduction in the number of endorsements, or collapsing of endorsements, in different areas; (f) giving experienced teachers conditional licenses when they are suddenly expected to serve new students; and (g) the limited supervision and evaluation of teachers of students with severe disabilities. This last problem was said to possibly reflect lower expectations held for teachers who work with students who may be "less valued" because of the severity of their disabilities. Some of the comments made by participants in the focus group that represent these problems follow:

> We've delivered programs where the faculty are. And it doesn't allow some people to have access to training.

> If there are no programs then there's no need. If there's a small need, then why develop a new program? With the existing programs, if you only graduate three a year, SCHEV (State Council on Higher Education for Virginia) is going to say 'Your productivity is really low; therefore, we are cutting that program out'....The reality has to become part of the decision that for these low incidence areas, nine times out of ten, we will not have a program at an institution level specifically designed for that program.

> The two categories [of waivers] that are the biggest ones are the

people who are general ed. teachers who are teaching out of their field, and then the next one is the special ed. teacher who has crossed over. Like the LD teacher crossed over to MR....And then there's the third group that I feel like might be there....the guy who's a good track coach and they just want to keep him around. And he doesn't particularly care to teach anything but be the track coach.

You've got a teacher who is MR endorsed and she's (or he's) been working with a broad group of children with mental retardation for twenty years and she really likes kids who are 'TMR'. And then a new kid moves into the school division and that child has a severe disability. All of a sudden her license gets yanked and she gets put on a conditional license and she has to go back and complete 12 hours. And then we've got an LD teacher who is endorsed in LD and ED and an MR kid moves in, and now she has to go back and get nine hours. So we are constantly telling teachers they are not qualified. But they've been there twenty years.

To me, the bigger problem is more of almost a social one. If these people are going unsupervised, in essence unevaluated, partly because the people who are supposed to do that don't understand clearly what it means to work well with kids like that because they don't care enough to say...I mean, they are grateful that they have a warm body there. And to them, it's like that's sufficient. If you show up to work and you don't actively abuse anyone, and by the way some of these people are actively abusing kids, and a lot of supervisors don't realize it, that's enough. As long as we have that view, that kids with severe disabilities are less important than this other constellation of kids, we are going to have that continuing problem.

Recommendations for training teachers. Although there were fewer direct recommendations made for training teachers than there were problems listed, there was more discussion among multiple participants about some of those recommendations. For example, four of the participants made comments about developing mentoring programs for teachers working with students having severe disabilities, and three participants discussed the importance of teaching special and general education teachers to collaborate. Two participants suggested that specialization in a field (e.g., severe disabilities) should not occur until the post-baccalaureate level, after receiving generic training in special education (i.e., there should be more emphasis on inservice training,

rather than preservice). Another topic discussed by several participants was the possibility of utilizing more long-distance, satellite technology, instruction. Some of the statements reflecting these recommendations are as follows:

> If you talk to the general teacher, they are constantly talking about how more and more they are being pulled into working with students [with disabilities]....So that I think that more needs to be done with the teachers in the regular education area, as far as teacher preparation programs in that area.
>
> But I also think that the regular classroom teacher and special education teachers need training in, or assistance with, how to collaborate. Because the regular classroom teacher really hasn't been trained, nor has that necessarily been valued. I mean, we don't give them time to collaborate for one thing.
>
> So the professional studies may get away from "the curriculum development" course. Because a new teacher doesn't develop curriculum. You know, they are handed a notebook and told 'Here it is'. But they do need the skills of consultation.
>
> I think mentoring is a very, very effective way to do things. The problem, especially in rural areas, is the SPH person [is the only one in an area]...and probably would have to travel to another division to work with somebody else.
>
> And I think that part of the mentoring issue is that it has to be systematized, that it can't just be this loosey-goosey thing.
>
> I think what you'll see in the future is that the definition of what teacher training is going to be at the preservice level will be drastically different than what it is today because it will...have to address the issues of multicultural diversity and special populations. And all teachers will have to be, I mean, we will have to have closer consensus of what the basic skills of a teacher should be, regardless of their endorsement, or regardless of the field that they may be going into....The undergraduate degree will focus on producing a teacher, and then the specialization will come after this.
>
> It needs to be focused, people need to be given in a sense a sabbatical for a year and told, 'You go away and train to be our SPH person, and we will hold a spot for you when you come back'....I think you are really looking at an after-market, or

post-baccalaureate type of training program for all of these areas.

Well, also you have the satellite system. We ought to be using more technology. A lot more.

We can aggregate in a relatively close geographic area to get six [students]. So you come together in this 50 mile radius. But when you are talking about the groups that you are talking about, to get six together you are talking about half of the state....The groups that you are serving, the numbers are not great enough to say we can spread it around the state and model it that way. Bring the cohort together in a unit somewhere and focus on that unit.

Project Impact

About 75 trainees were targeted to receive training leading to an endorsement in the area of severe and profound disabilities. All of these trainees participated in at least one course, while 61 of them completed most or all of the project requirements. Of this group of trainees, 50 successfully met the endorsement requirements and one other trainee has a single course remaining. Therefore, the Endorsement Project has resulted in 50 teachers receiving an endorsement in the area of severe and profound disabilities, 11 teachers significantly improving their professional skills, and 14 teachers improving their teaching capabilities in one or several topical areas. The results of our evaluation activities, particularly the trainee questionnaire and the trainee case studies, provide strong social validation of these impact statements

Discussion and Implications for Future Personnel Training

Based upon the evaluation findings, it appears that the teachers who completed most or all of the endorsement requirements were positively influenced by the Endorsement Project and that the quality of their educational programs appeared to improve. In this next section, our observations of the Endorsement Project are grouped under two main categories: (a) Those specific to the Endorsement Project, and (b) those that apply more broadly to personnel preparation for low incidence populations in general.

Issues Specific to the Endorsement Project

Recruitment. There were several problems related to recruiting applicant for the program. First, during the first cycle, many of the notices sent to school divisions inviting candidates to apply were not passed from the administrators to the appropriate teachers. Thus, a sizable number of potentially suitable

candidates simply were not informed of the program and did not apply. This problem was resolved in subsequent cycles by sending letters directly to teachers and by placing notices in newsletters directed at teaching personnel.

A second, more serious, problem still in existence is that many of teachers of students with severe disabilities in Virginia had been able to retain their jobs for several years with little (if any) formal preparation and without a state teaching endorsement in Severe and Profound Handicaps. This situation arose through the State Department of Education's routine granting of waivers to the school divisions for unendorsed personnel. Few of the teachers, therefore, felt any real pressure to seek endorsement, particularly through a program that clearly required a substantial commitment of time and energy. Still others "fell into" teaching learners with severe disabilities, but did not plan to remain in the classroom for long, and determined, often accurately, that they could simply continue in the teaching positions without upgrading their skills.

The final concern regarding recruitment was that a good percentage of applicants had insufficient academic credentials to be admitted to the program. Program faculty believed that it was important to admit trainees who had a good chance of completing the program successfully; thus, all who applied were not admitted.

Collaboration and communication. The collaboration across universities, although one of the program's greatest strengths, also created some challenges. One of them simply was the difficulty of scheduling meetings among several busy people. (This was resolved somewhat in more recent years with the availability of electronic mail and fax machines). The problem was more complex, however, given the relationship of program faculty to consultants at the technical assistance centers, and program faculty and trainees. Each of those consultants routinely visited and interacted with teachers within a large geographical area. The project did not have a system for individuals to interact with one another that was both flexible and quick. While we had hoped to use the state's electronic mail system (Virginia PEN) to communicate with trainees, schools typically had inadequate computer facilities for teachers to access e-mail.

Motivation and attitude. As with any program, the students in the project enrolled for various reasons and, therefore, with various degrees of motivation. Some enrolled because they wanted to become more skilled as teachers. Others did so because they needed the endorsement to maintain their jobs. Many of the trainees -- especially in the first cycle -- had taught for several years and felt resentful about being taught material they believed they already knew. Similarly, there was reluctance on the part of some to learn new practices, particularly related to inclusion.

Discrepancy with practice. Program content was based on current exemplary practices. Unfortunately, there was often a wide discrepancy between ideal practices and those found in many of the schools in which trainees taught. Frequently, there was little or no opportunity for trainees to apply many of the practices espoused in this program. This typically resulted in frustration or disillusionment. What would have been helpful, perhaps, would have been to spend more time in the program teaching the trainees strategies for changing or working within the system.

Coordination of course content and practicum. The program consisted of both traditional coursework and practica, the latter of which was conducted in the trainees' individual classrooms. During the initial phase of the program, coursework and practica were handled separately. Trainees expressed displeasure with this arrangement because it: (a) tended to isolate what they were being taught from what they were expected to demonstrate, and (b) created the perception of additional work (even though the applications were with their own students regarding concerns necessary to those students' programs).

As a result of feedback from trainees, program faculty altered the arrangement and more fully integrated classwork and practicum. One of the key changes was to establish individual practicum assignments with trainees after the technical assistant consultants visited the trainees' classrooms so that assignments could complement actual program needs.

Issues Related to Personnel Preparation in General

Impact of inclusion. When the proposal for the Endorsement Project was developed, the term "inclusion" was hardly known in Virginia. Much has changed in the past six years, and few would argue today that the personnel preparation needs are not shifting. There now is a need for highly prepared general education teachers and for a new kind of professional, such as an "inclusion specialist," who has more specialized knowledge of learners, as well as strategies for adapting curriculum, collaborative teamwork, and other issues.

This issue has profound implications, not only for teacher preparation, but for the preparation of all school personnel -- certainly including related services personnel -- who work with students having low incidence disabilities. One certainly must question how much longer traditional single-category only teacher training grants can or will be supported.

Shrinking funds. Funding that has traditionally been available for personnel preparation grant money through the Office of Special Education Programs has been in a slow, but steady, decline. The Congressional elections

of 1994 are fueling potentially deeper budget cuts, or even elimination of some programs. At the same time, state support to higher education has been waning in many states, resulting in higher tuition costs and reductions, consolidation, and elimination of programs.

There clearly is a need to explore creative, low-cost methods of preparing personnel, particularly for low incidence populations. Colleges and universities increasingly will be forced to consider technology as a means of delivering information across long distances to a greater number of students. To make this cost effective and increase the number of students, deans of schools of education at universities along with departmental chairs must take this opportunity to help fashion greater collaboration among faculty who traditionally may have been categorical and protective of their own areas.

Preservice versus inservice training. The distinction between preservice and inservice training has long been blurry. Given the tradition of universities not only preparing personnel but of working collaboratively with schools, there will be an increasing role for higher education to provide technical assistance to school personnel. Moreover, colleges should encourage master teachers and other experienced personnel to return and assist existing faculty teach new generations of preservice students.

Assurance Statement

Copies of this full final report have been mailed to the U.S. Department of Education, OSERS and to the ERIC Clearing House on Handicapped and Gifted Children. In order to facilitate the dissemination of this model of personnel preparation and our findings, we also have mailed copies of the title page and abstract/executive summary to NEC*TAS, National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education, NICHCY, TAPP, National Diffision Network, and CASSP.

References

Drake, G. P. (1994).

Meyer, L.H., Eichinger, J., & Park-Lee, S. (1987). A validation of program quality indicators in educational services for students with severe disabilities. The Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, 12, 251-263

Appendix A: Timeline of Objectives, Activities, and Accomplishments

Appendix A. Time line for Accomplishment of Project Objectives

Objective 1: Recruit and Select Trainees.

	Activity	Timeline	Responsible Personnel
1.	Select Applicants	Repeat A - D:	Regional Dirs.
A.	Write Application Nov 1989 **Completed/Modified Cycles 1,2,3,**	Nov 1989, Jan 1991, Jan 1992	
B.	Write Special Ed Directors **COMPLETED Cycles 1, 2, 3**	Oct - Dec, 1989 Feb 1991 Feb 1992	Grad Asst.
C.	Write Articles about Project for TAC, Virginia TASH, MASH newsletters **COMPLETED Cycles 1,2,3**	Sept 89 - Jan 90 Jan - May, 1991 Jan - May, 1992	Regional Dirs. Grad Asst.
D.	Contact Virginia Statewide Systems Change Project to solicit names of potential applicants **COMPLETED Cycles 1,2,3**	Sept 89 - Jan 90 Jan - May, 1991 Jan - April, 1992	Grad Asst.
E.	Advertise project at state conferences administrators, state Department of Education conferences for teachers, etc. **COMPLETED Cycles 1,2,3**	Several times annually	
2.	Select Trainees	Repeat A - C:	
A.	Develop rating incitement to use in review of applications **COMPLETED/MODIFIED Cycles 1,2,3**	Oct - Nov, 1989 Nov - Dec, 1990 Mar - Apr, 1992	Regional Dirs.
B.	Rate applicants and select **COMPLETED Cycles 1,2,3**	Dec, 1989 Mar, 1991 Mar - Apr, 1992	Grad Asst.
C.	Pay particular attention to minority **COMPLETED Cycles**	Dec, 1989 Mar, 1991 Mar - Apr, 1992	Grad Asst.

Appendix A. Timeline for Accomplishment of Project Objectives

Objective 2: Develop and Offer Quality Course work.

	Activity	Timeline	Responsible Personnel
1.	Modify courses to meet need **COMPLETED Cycle 1,2,3**	Ongoing	Regional Dir. Grad Asst.
2.	Plan for the use of satellite transmission of courses during **DROPPED for Cycles 1 and 2; inadequate numbers**	Oct - Jun, 1989	Regional Dir. Cntg Ed Div at UVA, GMU, VCU
3.	Obtain necessary University clearances to offer modified courses for Cycle 1 **COMPLETED**	Jan, July, Dec, 1990	Regional Dir.
4.	Develop syllabus for Summer Institute in Cycle 1 **COMPLETED**	June, 1990	Regional Dir. Grad Asst.
5.	Offer Functional Curriculum course **COMPLETED**	Jan - May, 1990	Regional Dir.
6.	Offer Summer Institute **COMPLETED**	July, 1990	Regional Dir. Grad Asst.
7.	Offer remaining Cycle 1 courses **COMPLETED**	Sept - Dec, 1990 Jan - May, 1991	Regional Dir.
8.	Modify Cycle 1 courses based on evaluations by trainees **COMPLETED Cycle 1**	July, 1990 Jan - May, 1991	Regional Dir. Grad. Asst.
9.	Modify Summer Institute based trainees by Directors, cooperating teachers **COMPLETED**	Sept - Dec, 1990 Jan - May, 1991	Regional Dir. Grad Asst.
10.	Obtain necessary university clearances to offer modified courses in Cycle 2 **COMPLETED**	Jan - May, 1991	Regional Dir. Grad Asst.
11.	Offer Summer Institute to Cycle 2 trainees **COMPLETED**	July, 1991	Regional Dir. Grad Asst.
12.	Offer remaining Cycle 2 courses **COMPLETED**	Sept - Dec, 1991 Jan - Jul, 1992 July 1991 - Aug, 1992	Regional Dir.

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(continued)

Appendix A. Timeline for Accomplishment of Project Objectives (con'd.)

Objective 2: Develop and Offer Quality Coursework.

	Activity	Timeline	Responsible Personnel
13.	Modify Cycle 2 courses based on evaluation by trainees and Regional Directors **COMPLETED**	July, 1991 Jan - Jul, 1992	Regional Dir.
14.	Modify Cycle 2 Summer Institute based on evaluation by trainees, Regional Directors Graduate Assistant, and cooperating teachers. **COMPLETED**	Jan - July, 1991	Regional Dir. Grad Asst.
15.	Obtain necessary university permission to offer modified Cycle 3 courses **COMPLETED**	Jan - Dec, 1992	Regional Dir. Grad Asst.
16.	Offer Cycle 3 courses **COMPLETED**	Sept - Dec, 1992 Jan - May, 1993 Sept - Dec, 1993	Regional Dir. Grad Asst.
17.	Offer Summer Institute to Cycle 3 trainees **COMPLETED**	June, 1993	Regional Dir. Grad Asst.

Appendix A. Time line for Accomplishment of Project Objectives

Objective 3: Develop, Offer, and Supervise Practica

Activity	Timeline	Responsible Personnel
1. Plan practicum experiences with project faculty, TAC staff, and David Aldrich (State Dept. of Education, SPH consultant) **COMPLETED Cycles 1,2,3**	Oct, 1989 Jan, 1990 Feb - June 1990 May, 1991 Jan, May 1992 August, 1992	Regional Dir. Grad Asst TAC Personnel D. Aldrich
2. Develop syllabus for Cycle 1 practicum **COMPLETED**	Jan - May, 1990	Regional Dir. Grad Asst. Regional Ten Comm. Services Staff
3. Develop syllabi for Cycle 1 **COMPLETED**	Jan - May, 1990	Regional Dir. Grad Asst.
4. Revise Practicum Handbook for use in practicum experiences **COMPLETED**	Mar - June, 1990	Regional Dir. Grad Asst. TAC Personnel
5. Offer and supervise Cycle 1 Summer Institute Practicum **COMPLETED**	July, 1990	Regional Dir. Grad Asst. Regional Ten Comm. Services Staff
6. Secure clearances for on-the-job practica **COMPLETED Cycles 1,2,3**	Apr - May, 1990 Nov - Dec, 1990 May - Jun, 1991 Nov - Dec, 1991 Jul - Aug, 1992 Nov - Dec, 1992	Regional Dir. Grad Asst.
7. TAC personnel meet with trainees to schedule supervision and plan exact nature of supervision **MODIFICATION: VA Statewide Systems Change Personnel not included in Cycle 2 planning as Snell, Orelove, Jones, and Bierman (GMU) with 3 TAC staff COMPLETED Cycles 1,2,3**	Jul, 1990 Sept, 1993 Sept, 1990 Jan, 1994 Jan, 1991 July, 1991	Regional Dir. TAC Personnel

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Appendix A. Timeline for Accomplishment of Project Objectives

Objective 3: Develop, Offer, and Supervise Practica

	Activity	Timeline	Responsible Personnel
8.	Offer and supervise on-the-job follow-up evaluation (year 5) **MODIFICATION: VA Statewide Systems Change Personnel not included in Cycle 2 planning as Snell, Orelove, Jones, Bierman (GMU) adequate with 3 TAC staff**	Sept - Dec, 1990 Jan - May, 1991 Sept - Dec, 1991 Jan - May, 1992 Sept - Dec, 1992 Jan - May, 1993	Regional Dir. TAC Personnel
9.	Revise practicum syllabi based on evaluations by trainees, regional directors, TAC, personnel **COMPLETED Cycles 1,2,3**	Nov - Dec, 1990 May - Jul, 1991 Nov - Dec, 1991 May - July, 1992 Nov - Dec, 1992	Regional Dir. TAC personnel
10.	Revise and offer Cycle 2 and Cycle 3 Institute Practica based on evaluations **MODIFICATION: Evaluation from Cycle 1 indicated practicum made Institute <u>too</u> intensive; independent study (1 credit), substituted for Cycle 2 and projected for Cycle 3, focused on improvement of school programs.**	May - Jul, 1991 May - July, 1993	Regional Dir. Grad Asst.

Appendix A. Time line for Accomplishment of Project Objectives

Objective 4: Establish Network of Teachers

	Activity	Timeline	Responsible Personnel
1.	Offer Summer Institute **June dates changed to July** **COMPLETED Cycles 1,2,3**	July, 1990 July, 1990 June - July, 1993	Regional Dir. Grad Asst.
2.	Train Students on use of Special Net **MODIFICATION: Dropped due to inadequate availability of availability of computers and modems to trainees**	July, 1990 July, 1991 July, 1993	Regional Dir. Grad Asst.
3.	Distribute directory of trainees, directors, TAC personnel, VA Statewide Systems Change Coordinators **June dates changed to July** **July, 1991 changed to Sept, 1991** **COMPLETED Cycles 1,2,3**	July, 1990 July, 1991 July, 1993	Regional Dir. Grad Asst.

Appendix A. Timeline for Accomplishment of Project Objectives

Objective 5: Coordinate Agencies Involved with the Project

	Activity	Timeline	Responsible Personnel
1.	Work with Continuing Ed courses off campus [and to plan for courses taught through satellite transmission] **MODIFICATION: Drop satellite due to inadequate students.**	Jan, 1990 Jul - Dec, 1990 May - Dec, 1990 May - Dec, 1992 May - Aug, 1993	Regional Dir. Grad Asst.
2.	Secure approval for project courses from universities **COMPLETED Cycles 1,2,3**	Dec, 1989 Jan, 1990 May, 1990 Aug, 1992	Regional Dir.
3.	Finalize procedures with Retraining Grant Coordinators to secure Retraining Grant funds for trainees at UVA, GMU, and VCU **COMPLETED Cycle 1** **NO RETRAINING FUNDS Cycles 2,3**	Dec, 1989 (Cycle 1) May, 1990; May 1991; May 1992; May 1993	UVA & GMU Regional Dirs.
4.	Secure permission to offer project campus **COMPLETED Cycles 1,2,3**	Dec - Jan, 1989 May - Dec, 1990 May - Dec, 1991 May - Dec, 1992 May - Aug, 1993	Regional Dir. Grad Asst.
5.	Periodic discussions with SEA staff on certification and endorsement, Retraining Grants, TAC's etc. to clarify policy, recommend modifications or communicate regional and local needs in SPH programs **COMPLETED Cycles 1,2,3**	End of each project year	Regional Dir.
6.	Finalize plans for Summer Institute **MODIFICATION: practica during summer replaced by independent study due to shortage of time during two-week session**	Nov, 1989 - Mar, 1990 Nov, 1990 - July, 1991 Nov, 1992 - July, 1993	UVA Regional Dir., Grad Asst Regional Dirs.
7.	Meet with TAC personnel to determine role in practica, establish protocol for supplying feedback, interface with VA SWSCP, etc. **COMPLETED Cycles 1,2,3**	Jun - Aug, 1990 Jan - Jun, 1991 Jan, 1992 Aug, 1992	Regional Dir. TAC Personnel
8.	Contact TAC staff to advertise Project, solicit names of prospective trainees **COMPLETED Cycles 1,2,3**	Oct - Dec, 1989 Jan - May, 1991 Jan - July, 1992	Regional Dir. Grad Asst. Secretary
9.	Advertise project through VA TASH and MASH newsletter **COMPLETED Cycles 1,2,3**	Oct - Dec, 1989 Jan - May, 1991	Regional Dir. Grad Asst.

Appendix A. Timeline for Accomplishment of Project Objectives

Objective 6: Provide an Effective System of Management for the Project

	Activity	Timeline	Responsible Personnel
1.	Hire Graduate Assistant(s) **COMPLETED Cycles 1,2,3**	Varies: completed when needed	UVA Director with VCU & GMU Directors
2.	Solicits Applicants for Trainee Positions A. Write Special Ed Directors B. Write and place articles in TAC, VA TASH, and MASH newsletters **COMPLETED Cycles 1,2,3**	Repeat A - B: Sept, 1989 Jan - Feb, 1991 Jan - Feb, 1992	Regional Dir. Grad Asst. Secretary
3.	Hold management meetings **IN PROGRESS: Began in August 1989 MODIFICATION: Meetings twice monthly with Project Director and grad assistant; meetings four times a year with Regional Director and TAC consultants**	Oct, 1989 - Sept, 1993	Regional Dirs. Grad Asst. TAC Personnel
4.	Evaluate each application, select trainees **COMPLETED Cycles 1,2,3**	Dec, 1989 Feb, 1991 Feb, 1992	Regional Dir. Grad Asst.
5.	Notify applicants of admission decisions **COMPLETED Cycles 1,2,3**	Dec, 1989 Mar, 1991 Mar, 1992	Regional Dir. Grad Asst. Secretary
6.	Enroll trainees at home universities **COMPLETED Cycles 1,2,3**	Jan, 1990 Apr - Jun, 1991 Apr - Jun, 1992	Regional Dir. Secretary
7.	Enroll trainees for UVA Summer Institute **COMPLETED Cycles 1,2,3**	July 1990 July 1991 July 1993	UVA Regional Dir. Grad Asst. Secretary
8.	Notify Retraining Grant Coordinators of Project Trainees and Retraining Grant Funds **COMPLETED Cycles 1,2 MODIFICATION: no state retraining funds available in Cycle 3**	Dec 1989 May 1990; May 1991; May 1992; May 1993	Regional Dir. Grad Asst. Secretary
9.	Send Retraining Grant applications to trainees to trainees **Completed Cycle 1,2, Modification: no state retraining funds available in Cycle 3**	Dec 1989 Aug 1990; Aug 1991; Aug 1992	Grad Asst. Regional Dir. Secretary

Appendix A. Timeline for Accomplishment of Project Objectives (cont'd).

Objective 6: Provide an Effective System of Management for the Project

	Activity	Timeline	Responsible Personnel
10.	Arrange off-campus course sites	Repeat A - C:	Regional Dir.
	A. Select site	Dec 1989	Grad Asst.
	B. Obtain permission to use sites	Jan 1990	GMU and VCU
	C. Obtain consortium permission	Feb - April 1991	Regional Dir.
	COMPLETED Cycles 1,2,3	Mar - June 1992	and Grad Asst.
11.	Monitor financial accounting of project expenditures	Monthly: ongoing throughout project	Grad Asst. and Secretary UVA Regional Dir. University Accounting Systems, UVA, VCU, GMU, VPI
	COMPLETED Cycles 1,2,3		

Appendix A. Timeline for Accomplishment of Project Objectives

Objective 7: Apply evaluation plan

	Activity	Timeline	Responsible Personnel
1.	Project staff receive brief training session on simplified DEM **MODIFICATION: Informal procedures used, no formal training needed**	Oct - Nov, 1989	Project Dir.
2.	Detail information in Project timeline for Year 1 **COMPLETED**	Nov - Dec, 1989	Regional Dir. Grad Asst.
3.	Detail information in timeline for successive project years for continuation applications at beginning of each project ' **COMPLETED Project years 1-5**	Annually when continuation applications are written	Regional Dir. Grad Asst.
4.	Obtain and anlyze annual evaluation by outside **MODIFICATION: Inadequate funds to hire evaluator**	Sept, 1990 1991, 1992, 1993	Evaluator Regional Dir.
5.	Modify project objectives and accordingly **MODIFICATION: Use trainee evaluations, TAC and Regional Director evaluations** **COMPLETED Cycles 1,2,3**	July, 1990 Jan, July 1991 Jan, July 1992 Jan, Aug 1993	Regional Dir. Grad Asst.
6.	Use timeline as a guide to informally evaluate in regularly scheduled project meetings **MODIFICATION: Frequency reduced to match meeting schedule** **COMPLETED Cycles 1,2,3**	Bimonthly and quarterly depending on meeting	All staff
7.	Cross-check course and practica competencies with Program Quality Indicators (PQI) checklist (Meyer, et al. 1987) **COMPLETED Cycle 1** **MODIFICATION: Revision of practicum materials with Meyer's PQI used indirectly**	Quarterly	Regional Dir. Grad Att. TAC project
8.	Specific type of data needed or improve data collection instructments for project activities **COMPLETED Cycles 1,2,3**	Quarterly	Regional Dir. Grad Asst.

Appendix A. Timeline for Accomplishment of Project Objectives

Objective 8: Disseminate project results

	Activity	Timeline	Responsible Personnel
1.	Compile results of project **COMPLETED Cycles 1,2,3**	Sept 1991 Sept 1992 Jan - Apr 1993 Jun - Dec 1994	Grad Asst. Regional Dir. Secretary
2.	Highlight trainees and project in TAC newsletters **COMPLETED Cycles 1,2,3**	Oct and May 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993	Grad Asst. TAC personnel Regional Dir.
3.	Submit proposal to present project results at TASH, MASH state, VCASE conference **MODIFICATION: Submission for 1994 TASH Conference with evaluation activities scheduled for year 5**	Jan - June 1993 Jan 1994	Grad Asst. and UVA Regional Dir.
4.	Present preliminary project results at conferences **MODIFICATION: Date changed**	Jan - Oct 1994 Dec 1994	Regional Dir.
5.	Write and submit articles delineating project results to TASH, CEC, CASE, TEASE journals and newsletters **MODIFICATIONS: Underway; one ms. to be submitted on project model (TEASE), a second on teacher's characteristics (TASE)**	Jan - Oct, 1994 Dec 1994 - Feb 1995	Regional Dir. Grad Asst.
6.	Publicize results through Virginia SPH TAC newsletters after Cycle 1 and 2 **MODIFICATION: After Cycle 3** **COMPLETED**	May, 1994	Grad Asst.
7.	New: Complete "White Paper" on personnel preparation in severe disabilities based on focus group discussion and project results **MODIFICATION: Focus group discussion completed Dec; "White Paper" completion anticipated in February, 1995**	June - Dec 1994	Regional Dir. Grad Asst.

Appendix B: Trainee Survey

Cycle: 3 Region: Southeastern

SURVEY
Virginia Statewide Project to Endorse Teachers in Severe and Profound Handicaps

For the following questions, please place a check mark on the line next to **all** responses that apply to your situation:

1. Are you currently **teaching**? _____ Yes _____ Other (Please tell us on the line below what you are currently doing if you are not teaching.)

_____

If you are not currently teaching or working with individuals with disabilities, please skip questions 2 through 5 and go to questions 6 through 8.

2. Who are you **currently** teaching or working with? **People with** (check all that apply):

_____ Severe/Profound Handicaps
_____ Mild Mental Retardation ("EMR")
_____ Moderate Mental Retardation ("TMR")
_____ Visual Impairments (Blind)
_____ Deafness/Blindness
_____ Students in General (Regular) Ed.
_____ Learning Disabilities
_____ Emotional Disturbance (ED/BD)
_____ Multiple Handicaps
_____ Cerebral Palsy
_____ Hearing Impairments (Deaf)

Other: _____

3. What **age** group(s) do you teach or work with?

_____ Infants/Toddlers
_____ Preschool Children
_____ Elementary School Children
_____ Middle School Children
_____ High School Adolescents
_____ Adults

4. What **setting** do you teach or work in?

_____ Early Intervention
_____ Public School
_____ Private School
_____ Residential or Hospital
_____ Adult Services

Other: _____

Please Go To The Next Page

5. For each topic below, we would like you to consider the **degree** to which your participation in the Endorsement Project changed or influenced your thinking and practices. For the first list (**a-j**), consider how the program changed or influenced your **thinking**. **Circle** the response that most closely matches how you feel, or **circle** A/T indicating that you already thought about the topic the way it was presented in the Endorsement Project.

	The program changed or influenced my **thinking...**				
a. Inclusion:	Very much	Quite a lot	A little bit	None	A/T
b. Working with Families:	Very much	Quite a lot	A little bit	None	A/T
c. Transition, Vocational Skills, and Supported Employment:	Very much	Quite a lot	A little bit	None	A/T
d. Communication Skills:	Very much	Quite a lot	A little bit	None	A/T
e. Transdisciplinary Teaming/ Collaboration:	Very much	Quite a lot	A little bit	None	A/T
f. Functional and Age-Appropriate Skills:	Very much	Quite a lot	A little bit	None	A/T
g. Positioning and Handling:	Very much	Quite a lot	A little bit	None	A/T
h. Nonaversive Techniques:	Very much	Quite a lot	A little bit	None	A/T
i. Peer Support Networks:	Very much	Quite a lot	A little bit	None	A/T
j. Student Performance Data to Improve Programs:	Very much	Quite a lot	A little bit	None	A/T

Please Go To The Next Page

In this section, please **circle** the response that most closely matches the degree to which the program changed or influenced your **practice** of topics **k-t**, or **circle** A/P indicating that you already practiced the topic as it was discussed in the Endorsement Project .

	The program changed or influenced my **practice...**				
k. Inclusion:	Very much	Quite a lot	A little bit	None	A/P
l. Working with Families:	Very much	Quite a lot	A little bit	None	A/P
m. Transition, Vocational Skills, and Supported Employment:	Very much	Quite a lot	A little bit	None	A/P
n. Communication Skills:	Very much	Quite a lot	A little bit	None	A/P
o. Transdisciplinary Teaming/ Collaboration:	Very much	Quite a lot	A little bit	None	A/P
p. Functional and Age-Appropriate Skills:	Very much	Quite a lot	A little bit	None	A/P
q. Positioning and Handling:	Very much	Quite a lot	A little bit	None	A/P
r. Nonaversive Techniques:	Very much	Quite a lot	A little bit	None	A/P
s. Peer Support Networks:	Very much	Quite a lot	A little bit	None	A/P
t. Student Performance Data to Improve Programs:	Very much	Quite a lot	A little bit	None	A/P

Please Go To The Next Page

Please answer the following open-ended questions **even if you are not currently** teaching or working with individuals with disabilities. Use the enclosed blank page to continue your comments if there is not room below the questions. Thank you for your time and early response!

6. In what way, if any, did the Endorsement Project change your **thinking** about individuals with severe disabilities and their families?

7. In what way, if any, did the Endorsement Project change your **practices** with individuals with severe disabilities and their families?

8. Please share with us any other comments you would like to make about the Endorsement Project. We would particularly appreciate your feedback about aspects of the project you think we should **keep**, and aspects of it you think we should **change** for future programs (i.e., What did you especially like and dislike about the program?)

Please return as soon as possible in the stamped, pre-addressed envelope to Kerri Frymier, Curry School of Education, University of Virginia, 235 Ruffner 405 Emmet St., Charlottesville, VA 22903.

Thank You!

Appendix C: Faculty and Staff Questionnaire Survey

Endorsement Project Staff Questionnaire

Please respond thoroughly to the following questions on a floppy disk, either Macintosh or DOS format, and mail the disk to

Kerri Martin
Department of Curriculum, Instruction, and Special Education
235 Ruffner Hall, 405 Emmet Street
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia 22903

1. **When, and where, were you involved in the Endorsement project and what was your role?** (Cycle 1 was July 1990 - August 1991; Cycle 2 was from July 1991 - August 1992, and; Cycle 3 was July 1992 - December 1993. The Regions were Southwest, UVA; Northern, GMU, and; Southeast, VCU)

2. **Of the procedures that *you specifically used* to fulfill your role in the project, what do you think were the strengths, and areas needing improvement?** Please comment on each of the strengths and weaknesses you mention.

3. **Of the Endorsement Project overall, what do you think were the strengths, and areas needing improvement?** Please comment on each of the strengths and weaknesses you mention.

4. The following list represents the most frequent criticisms about the project from project participants (36 participants of the 58 we sent surveys to have returned them thus far). Their remarks are in response to a question asking them to comment on strengths and weaknesses of the project overall. **Please respond to these comments.**

   a. There were too many assignments in too short a time.
   b. There was too much "theory" and not enough practical, "hands-on," information (e.g., specific strategies for x, y, z).
   c. There was not always sufficient coordination among project staff (e.g., staff sometimes contradicted each other regarding assignment expectations and evaluation).
   d. There have been some problems getting credit for Endorsement Project courses from the VA State Department of Education.

5. **Now consider the attached list of direct quotes from project participants' surveys and respond to any of those that you would like to address.** Other project staff members have not been shown comments that mention or imply you specifically; such comments are being shared only with you and have been viewed only by Kerri Frymier and Marti Snell and will be kept confidential.

6. **If you were to design a teacher training project to address unendorsed teachers of students with severe disabilites, what new ideas might you build into the design?** Please address at least each of the following programming issues:

   recruitment of participants
   content of training
   relationship with St. Dpt. of Education
   practicum (how to supervise, assignments, etc.)
   involvement of other universities
   coursework
   evaluation